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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: POLL SHOWS MAJORITY OF ROMANIANS OPPOSED TO
ROMANIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN IRAQ

1. (U) Summary: A Center for Urban and Rural Sociology (CURS) poll released March 28 shows that more than half of Romanians oppose the country's military presence in Iraq. On other key issues, the poll indicates that Romanians are against early elections and believe the fight against corruption should be the country's top priority. The CURS poll indicates that a slim majority of Romanians think their country is headed in the "right direction." The governing center-right National Liberal Party (PNL)-Democratic Party (PD) alliance tops the list of voter preferences, with over 48 percent support, trailed by former ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD) with 30 percent. A separate poll conducted by the independent National Institute for Public Opinion and Marketing Studies (INSOMAR) polling agency produced similar results, although it did not ask for views on Iraq. End Summary.

Opposed to Troops in Iraq; Concerned with Corruption

2. (U) The Center for Urban and Rural Sociology (CURS) published March 28 the results of an opinion poll conducted March 21-26. The poll results received widespread press coverage in leading Romanian print and broadcast media. The survey covered a wide range of issues related to domestic and international politics. Its question related to the presence of Romanian troops in Iraq was the first such polling question on the issue widely published in the media in well over a year.

3. (U) Responding to the question, "Do you support the presence of Romanian military in Iraq?" 55 percent said no, 36 percent said yes, and 9 percent had no opinion on the issue.

4. (U) Respondents to the CURS poll placed fighting corruption at the top of their list of the country's chief problems. In response to the question, "In your opinion, which is the most important problem that has to be dealt with now in Romania?" results showed:

	Percent
Fighting corruption	21
Living standards	19
Workplaces	19
Pensioners' problems	9
Support for agriculture	4
Solving youth problems	4
Economic revival	3
Combating inflation	2
Medical assistance	2
Legislative coherence	1
Reduction of the fiscal burdens	1
Housing	1
Bureaucracy	1
Joining EU	1
Other	4
No answer /Don't know	8
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	100

SNAP Elections?

5. (U) CURS polling results indicate that the majority of those surveyed (59 percent) oppose early parliamentary elections. Only 41 percent support snap elections, with 17 percent undecided. The CURS figures track with findings from an INSOMAR poll conducted March 17-21 and released March 24, which shows that 68 percent of those surveyed oppose snap elections, compared to only 32 percent in favor. President Traian Basescu has stated on several occasions that he would favor early elections, potentially this year.

PNL-PD Leads in Rankings

6. (U) Both the CURS and INSOMAR polls measured public support for Romania's political parties with the question: "If parliamentary elections took place tomorrow which party or political formation would you vote for?" In both polls, the ruling National Liberal Party - Democratic Party (PNL-PD) Alliance tops voters' preferences by roughly half,

trailed by the former ruling Social-Democratic Party (PSD) with 30 percent. Of Romania's smaller parties, only the extreme nationalist (PPRM) Popular Greater Romania Party and the ethnic Hungarian UDMR would receive enough votes to cross the 5 percent parliamentary threshold, according to both polls. 26 percent of those interviewed by INSOMAR and 39 percent of those interviewed by CURS indicated that they would not vote or did not have a voting preference.

	Percent	
	INSOMAR	CURS
PNL-PD	55	48
PSD	27	30
PPRM	9	8
UDMR	6	5
PUR	1	3
PPCD	1	2
Other party	1	4
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	100	100

PNL-PD Government: On the Right Track?

17. (U) According to the CURS poll, a slim majority of Romanians, 46 percent, believe that "things in Romania are going in the right direction", holding a slight edge over the 42 percent who believe the country is moving in the wrong direction. Respondents also indicated they are similarly divided over whether the current center-right PNL-PD government leads the country better than the previous center-left PSD government. In the CURS poll, 37 percent responded "better," 29 percent feel the current government performs the same as the previous PSD government, and 23 percent believe it is worse.

	Percent
Better	37
The same	29
Worse	23
No answer / Do not know	11
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	100

Comment

18. (SBU) While the CURS poll results on Romanian involvement in Iraq comes on the heels of President Basescu's March 27 visit to Romanian troops in Iraq and the March 28 hostage-taking of three Romanian journalists and one accompanying American in Iraq. Our contacts underscore that with the PSD scrambling to regain ground lost during last year's elections, Romanian involvement in Iraq could surface as an increasing point of contention in the country's political discourse. Nonetheless, top political leaders continue to emphasize that Romania plans to stay the course in Iraq.

19. (SBU) The CURS poll results showing corruption at the top of the public agenda track with last fall's parliamentary elections and December presidential elections in which corruption became a major campaign issue. Romania's progress in fighting corruption also serves as a sticking point for Romania's planned 2007 EU accession, and will remain high on the GOR and public's radar following President Basescu's designation of the anti-corruption fight as a "national security priority." Our Embassy contacts underscore that while public support for the PNL-PD remains strong, snap elections, favored by President Basescu, are opposed by most lawmakers as well as the population surveyed in the two polls.

110. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website: www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest.

111. Minimize considered.

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